



Colorado Reads 2013

The Early Literacy Initiative



Reading is the key to experiencing the world around us. It's the key for understanding who we are, where we've been and where we're going. It's the key to learning and becoming capable, confident and contributing members of our communities.

Do you remember the first book that took you away and into a new life, or land, or idea? Have you seen the light in a child's eyes when she reads a word, or a sentence, or a book for the first time? We believe that it is important for every child in Colorado to have these kinds of experiences, the ones that can only happen through the magic of reading.

The ability to read helps ensure that a child will do well in school, in the workforce and ultimately, in life. President Barack Obama highlighted the importance of early learning in his State of the Union speech this year. His sentiments echo the opinions of other national leaders such as former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman. Right here at home, through our own TBD Colorado conversations, access to high-quality early childhood education was identified as a top priority. Voices from near and far tell us of the vital role early childhood education will play in the future success of Coloradans, and of the value of supporting our children's early education.

Last year the state launched *Colorado Reads: The Early Literacy Initiative*. This statewide movement focused public attention on the importance of early literacy and the impact early childhood education has on future academic achievement. Last year was only the beginning. This year's update, *Colorado Reads 2013*, reinforces our efforts to bring attention to the work being done across Colorado in early literacy, and invites every resident to join the movement and give every child the support to become a proficient reader by third grade.

We've had a lot of fun in the past year, and made strides in advancing children's literacy:

- ✓ We passed The READ Act - the first early literacy legislation in years that strengthened early identification of and interventions for struggling readers.
- ✓ We created the Office of Early Childhood and streamlined services to help ensure all children are valued, healthy and thriving.
- ✓ We received nearly \$30 million in the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Fund competition, and we're raising the quality of early learning experiences across the state.

Together with our many state and local partners, we continue to refine the blueprint for achieving reading success for every child growing up in Colorado. We continue to visit schools and early learning centers to uncover examples of success and help advance these early learning programs across the state. We press on to find better ways of supporting children, especially those at-risk, in their early development and learning.

We invite you to join Colorado Reads 2013 and be a part of the transformative power early literacy can bring to our neighborhoods, schools and communities.

John Hickenlooper
Governor

Joseph A. Garcia
Lieutenant Governor



Glossary of Acronyms

ABCD	/	Assuring Better Child Development
ACCESS	/	Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State
CAP4K	/	Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids
CCHE	/	Colorado Commission on Higher Education
CDE	/	Colorado Department of Education
CDHE	/	Colorado Department of Higher Education
CDHS	/	Colorado Department of Human Services
CDPHE	/	Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
CLEL	/	Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy
CPP	/	Colorado Preschool Program
ECLC	/	Early Childhood Leadership Commission
ELDG	/	Early Learning and Development Guidelines
ELL	/	English Language Learners
EPIC	/	Executives Partnering to Invest in Children
FRL	/	Free/Reduced Lunch
GSOC	/	Girl Scouts of Colorado
HCPF	/	Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
MIECHV	/	Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting
OB4C	/	One Book 4 Colorado
OCOF	/	One Congregation - One Family
OEC	/	Office of Early Childhood
PASO	/	Providers Advancing School Outcomes
QRIS	/	Quality Rating and Improvement System
READ	/	Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act
SIF	/	Social Innovation Fund
TCAP	/	Transitional Colorado Assessment Program
TQRIS	/	Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

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Colorado Literacy Week 2013

May 6-10, 2013

Community Conversation Snapshots





Colorado Reads 2013

The Early Literacy Initiative

What if all Colorado children had the opportunity to develop a love of reading in their early years and to read proficiently by third grade? The result would transform our state -- to a place boasting the highest graduation and college success rates and the most productive and engaged workforce in the nation. This is the vision of **Colorado Reads 2013: The Early Literacy Initiative** - a collaboration between families, caregivers, educators, businesses, community groups and others. The collective efforts around that vision are already showing successes we could hardly have imagined as we traveled the many miles of the statewide literacy bus tour that launched this initiative.

Consider the progress on goals outlined in last year's blueprint:

✓ **Strengthen Early Literacy Policy**

- Colorado passed the innovative Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act. The READ Act focuses on K-3 literacy development and early identification and remediation of reading problems. The READ Act supports coordination between families and schools to increase the chances that all children can read by the end of third grade.
- The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) established a new Office of Literacy to promote increased student achievement and to support districts, schools, and teachers in teaching the essential components of reading.

✓ **Align and Consolidate Early Childhood Programs into one Office of Early Childhood**

Governor Hickenlooper established the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in the Department of Human Services, co-locating major programs for young children in order to create efficiencies and strengthen collaboration. These alignment efforts for early childhood programs will deliver more effective services for the families that need and want support.

✓ **Strengthen the Early Childhood Workforce**

- The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) reversed a ruling that prohibited colleges and universities from offering a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Today, several institutions of higher education are creating bachelor's degree programs in Early Childhood Education that will be open for enrollment in the fall of 2013.
- The state has developed new Early Learning and Development Guidelines and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators that promote early literacy skills for young children.

✓ Identify and Eliminate Health and Development Barriers to Literacy

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is expanding opportunities to assure delivery of critical health, development, and family support services to children and families. The department was awarded a federal grant that will increase access to home visiting programs for hundreds of additional children and families in high need communities.

✓ Maximize Access to Preschool Programs

Governor Hickenlooper proposed a budget increase to early learning programs that would allow up to 6,500 additional children to receive services.

✓ Improve Early Learning Program Quality

The state won a \$30 million Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Fund grant, one of the largest competitive education grants Colorado has received to date. This funding will help significantly improve program quality for all licensed early childhood programs in the state. Importantly, support of parents as their child's first teacher will be at the heart of the work: the grant will help educate and empower families so they can best promote the optimal development of their children.

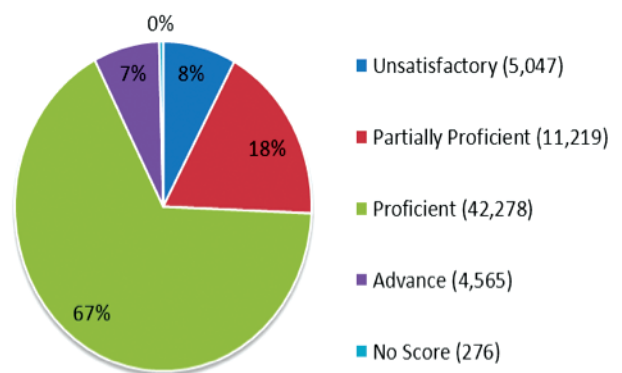
This impressive list of achievements shows that the momentum is here and the time is now to realize reading success for every child growing up in Colorado. This document, *Colorado Reads 2013*, is an update on the state's plan to ensure that every child is reading at grade level. In this document we take stock of progress throughout the state and outline a path forward to even greater gains. We also reflect on the sobering fact that much more work is needed to make significant progress on early literacy. Colorado can't become complacent when more than a quarter of the state's third graders are not reading proficiently. We hope that this second edition of *Colorado Reads* renews your personal call to action, and encourages and inspires all of the state's partners to help transform the reading culture of Colorado.

Third Grade Reading: Colorado Children

No one can guarantee equality of outcomes for children, but as a state we can take strides to ensure that each child has an equal opportunity for a successful future. The families of more than 690,000 young children (birth through age 8) in Colorado want the best for their children.¹ Bright and prosperous futures await most of these children, yet Colorado must also pay attention to the state's growing child poverty rate. More than 17 percent of the state's children are living in poverty and nearly 8 percent live in extreme poverty.²



2012 TCAP Scores (3rd Grade)



Colorado tracks student literacy achievement through the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program. In 2012, more than a quarter of Colorado third grade children struggled to meet basic proficiency on the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) literacy test.

Children who are economically disadvantaged and/or English learners tend to fare far worse than their peers on the TCAP. Of children eligible for free/reduced cost lunch (FRL), 40 percent were reading below grade level, while only 14 percent of middle- and high-income children were found to be at the same level.³ Only 52 percent of children with Limited English Proficiency scored at a proficient level on the assessment. Of those children who

were Non-English Proficient, 58 percent scored unsatisfactory and 29 percent scored Partially Proficient.⁴

As Colorado aims to improve third grade literacy rates, research-based strategies must be used to reach all children. Quality early instruction that addresses the specific needs of at-risk students is critical.

Special Focus: English Language Learners

Public schools across Colorado enroll a large number of students who have been identified as English Language Learners (ELL). More than 14 percent of all students enrolled in the 2012-2013 school year were classified as ELL with these children speaking more than 160 different languages.⁵ When these children enter kindergarten, they often lag behind their peers in the skills necessary to start reading. This gap often remains throughout their school years.

More than ever, there is a demand to meet the needs of those who find themselves in an education system not designed for their special circumstances. For Colorado's ELL population, the classroom can present obstacles to learning including a lack of access to quality ELL programs, a shortage of teachers with specialized training, and an insufficient curriculum. In addition, families with limited English are sometimes reluctant to expose their children to non-English language and print materials, fearing that this exposure might slow down their child's acquisition of English. Unfortunately, this lack of early exposure to literacy in the child's native language can compound early literacy deficits.



The school drop-out rate of ELL students is twice as high as their English speaking peers.⁶ When coupled with the fact that Colorado has seen a 250 percent increase in ELL students in the past decade, the duty to act is clear. The Hickenlooper-Garcia administration is determined to put these children on the right track to successful, productive futures.

Providing access to quality education, including valid assessments, effectively-trained educators, and responsive programs, is a vital part of ensuring that ELL students develop in parallel with their English speaking peers. Colorado is adopting a more comprehensive assessment system, called "Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-

State for English Language Learners" (ACCESS for ELLs). The instructional data from ACCESS for ELLs will be essential in providing the state, districts, schools, and educators the information they need to advance ELL literacy in all academic areas.

The Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) is also making investments in new partnerships in order to improve the professional development of ELL educators. Last fall an Improving Teacher Quality grant was awarded to the University of Colorado Denver for its partnership with Aurora Public Schools to address early literacy and language development in young English Language Learners. Another DHE competitive grant was awarded to support ELL educator development in the Colorado Springs area through online resources, structured observation sessions, workshops, and an intensive summer training institute.

Policies and programs to promote the development of children's early literacy skills, particularly for those who are most vulnerable to later literacy struggles, is one of the best investments Colorado can make. Effective professional development support for teachers and targeted early interventions for young students are investments that will positively impact later academic outcomes. These early efforts at home and in school are a much less costly investment than retaining students in later grades or enduring the larger economic consequences of students who drop out of high school.

The Issues: Status Report

Last year's *Colorado Reads: The Early Literacy Initiative* outlined five key issues that are critical to the success of our mission to ensure Colorado children have the opportunity to develop a love of reading in their early years and to read proficiently by third grade. Below is a status report on these issues, including both progress to celebrate, and areas for continued work. While the next steps listed below highlight the state role, success will not occur without the extraordinary efforts that take place in communities across Colorado. Every day thousands of committed and hard-working people - parents and families, business and community leaders, educators, medical professionals, caregivers, philanthropists, and policy makers - dedicate their time and talents to ensure children become readers.

ISSUE 1: Health and Development Risks

School readiness begins with good health. Health and developmental problems – whether physical, emotional, or social – threaten to delay a child's ability to learn and thrive, and highlight the importance of early identification and intervention. Providing early supports and services to children who have special developmental needs helps families support their child's development within the home and community environments. Health and development risks also highlight the critical role that health care providers must play in any effort to improve language acquisition and literacy. When health and developmental risks are identified early, interventions can be implemented and children can avoid further delays.



Progress

- ✓ **Home Visiting Programs.** Home visitation programs can set the foundation for successful learning. Home visiting is a combination of supports and services that result in positive impacts on child and family outcomes. Colorado's high quality home visitation programs such as **Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, Safe Care, Bright Beginnings, and Nurse Family Partnership** prepare young children to enter kindergarten by providing education and training to families and caregivers. Over the next several years, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) will expand home visiting opportunities through \$23 million in federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) grants. This funding provides for collaboration at the state and community level to improve health and development outcomes for at-risk children and families.
- ✓ **Help Me Grow** at the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) helps identify at-risk children and connects families to community-based programs through the **Assuring Better Child Development (ABCD)** program and the Medicaid Medical Homes for Children program.
- ✓ **Early Intervention Services.** Early identification and intervention for infants and toddlers with developmental concerns can positively change the learning trajectory for the rest of a child's life. Governor Hickenlooper proposed an additional \$1.8 million for early intervention services for children from birth through 2 years of age in his FY 2013-2014 budget.
- ✓ **Early Learning and Development Guidelines.** To ensure uniform agreement on what children should know and be able to do in the early years, the state has recently adopted the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines for children ages birth through 8 years. Developed by the **Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC)**, these comprehensive guidelines have been endorsed by the Colorado Departments of Education, Human Services, Public Health and Environment, Higher Education, and Health Care Policy and Financing. The guidelines include both the Colorado Academic Standards and the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. Information on child development, including how children develop literacy skills, will be disseminated to parents, as well as to the early childhood workforce.

Continuing the Work

	NEXT STEPS	TIMEFRAME	STATE AGENCY PARTNERS
1.1	Promote and give visibility to activities and resources that encourage parents and families to support children's language and reading development.	Ongoing	CDHS/OEC, CDPHE, CDE, Colorado State Library
1.2	Expand availability for early screening and assessment of children's learning and behavioral skills to identify those who may need further evaluation and support.	Ongoing	HCPF, CDHS/OEC, CDE, CDPHE
1.3	Support statewide dissemination and implementation of the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines in various health and early learning settings.	2013-2016	CDHS/OEC, CDE, CDPHE, HCPF
1.4	Expand home visitation to serve an additional 900 children and families.	2013-2016	CDPHE, CDHS/OEC

ISSUE 2: Early Childhood Program Quality

High-quality child care and early learning opportunities are essential to improving early literacy. Program quality hinges on both high standards and opportunities for continuous improvement. While all children benefit from high quality, effective early learning programs, the most significant learning impacts are for at-risk children.

Progress

- ✓ **Program Quality.** Colorado is celebrating the win of a four-year \$30 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund grant. The funds will allow Colorado to accelerate the work of improving access to high quality early childhood programs, especially for those most at-risk for later academic struggles. The money, awarded to the Colorado Office of Early Childhood will, among other things, help launch an improved Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for all licensed child care and early learning programs, and will provide incentives to increase the quality and effectiveness of programs. More than simply a standards and rating system, the QRIS system will help programs attain the necessary resources and support to improve their quality.
- ✓ **Assessment.** Comprehensive, developmentally appropriate assessment enables teachers to provide individualized, child-focused instruction in the classroom and helps the state understand the impact of various early childhood efforts. The Early Learning Challenge Fund will support the expansion of assessment, including a kindergarten readiness assessment for all children in public kindergarten.
- ✓ **Alignment.** To create better alignment, consistency and quality in early childhood programs, the Governor recently established the Office of Early Childhood. HB13-1117 would further expand alignment efforts for early childhood programs and supports and re-authorize the state Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), which advances quality across early childhood programs and services. Alignment and consolidation enables more efficient services for families that need and want support. The new Office of Early Childhood has an increased focus on child outcomes and family support services.

Continuing the Work

	NEXT STEPS	TIMEFRAME	STATE AGENCY PARTNERS
2.1	Launch the new early childhood universal application for parents to access information about desired supports and services.	2013-2015	CDHS/OEC, HCPF, CDPHE, CDE
2.2	Implement and elevate the new Quality Rating and Improvement (QRIS) standards for early childhood and preschool programs.	July 2014, Standards implemented. December 2016, 75% of programs in top tiers of quality.	CDHS/OEC, CDE
2.3	Implement individual school readiness plans for all CPP and Kindergarten children.	2013-2014	CDE, CDHS/OEC
2.4	Recognize and promote the importance of transition planning and practices that smooth the shifts between preschool, home and school.	2013-2016	CDE, CDHS/OEC, Governor & Lt. Governor's Office
2.5	Implement individual READ plans for K-3 students identified with a significant reading deficiency.	2013	CDE
2.6	Provide information, training, and other supports to families, friends, and neighbors who are involved with parents in the care and education of young children.	2014-2016	CDHS/OEC
2.7	Explore the effectiveness and efficacy of early literacy programs that utilize digital learning.	2013-2016	Lt. Governor's Office
2.8	Build effective communication activities to inform stakeholders and communities about the higher levels of quality standards.	2014-2016	CDHS/OEC, CDE

ISSUE 3: The Early Childhood Workforce

The adults in our early education and care settings have the potential to make a big difference in how each child develops. Teacher ability has a significant impact on students' reading achievement. To improve our understanding of the early childhood workforce and provide opportunities for professional development, the state will implement a Learning Management System. This web-based data system will offer unique capabilities for the administration, documentation, and tracking of professional development. Colorado is committed to improving provider and educator effectiveness throughout the early childhood years, from birth through third grade.

Progress

- ✓ **Four-year degrees.** Last year, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education reversed a ruling that prohibited colleges and universities from offering a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Today, several institutions of higher education are creating bachelor degree programs in Early Childhood that will soon be open for enrollment.
- ✓ **READ Act.** The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) conducted meetings to assist schools in identifying students with a significant reading deficiency.
- ✓ **Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators.** The Early Childhood Leadership Commission funded the development of Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators & Administrators – what early childhood educators and administrators should know and be able to do in order to be most effective at their job. These competencies, which include support for the development of pre-literacy and literacy skills, will be incorporated into degree and credential programs as well as into ongoing professional development, for those teaching children from birth through 8 years.
- ✓ **Educator Effectiveness.** The collaborative effort to support educator effectiveness is the comprehensive approach needed to meet the goals of the Colorado Reads 2013: Early Literacy Initiative. Rather than relying solely on test scores for educator evaluation, the Colorado Department of Education, with the support of the Colorado Legacy Foundation, is working with a variety of stakeholders to design, develop and pilot a State Model Evaluation System. The System's priorities are: data driven and informed decisions, continuous improvements, meaningful and credible feedback, stakeholder involvement, and alignment and support from within a larger system. From the 2011 through 2013 school years, 27 school districts around Colorado have been piloting the State Model Evaluation System.



Continuing the Work

	NEXT STEPS	TIMEFRAME	STATE AGENCY PARTNERS
3.1	Implement Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators.	2013-2016	CDHS/OEC, CDE, CDPHE, HCFP
3.2	Ensure Early Childhood two- and four year degree programs, credentials and certificates, and professional development opportunities support the new competencies.	2013-2016	CDHE, CDE, CDHS/OEC
3.3	Continue implementation of SB10-191, (Great Teachers and Great Leaders Act) with the new evaluation requirements for teachers and principals.	2013-2014	CDE
3.4	Encourage local planning efforts to support effective transition practices and activities for all children.	2013-2016	CDHS/OEC, CDE, CDPHE
3.5	Implement a Learning Management System (LMS) to guide and publicly report on workforce matters.	2013-2016	CDHS/OEC, CDE

ISSUE 4: Access to High-Quality Preschool Programs

Colorado currently makes significant investments in preschool programming throughout the state with the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). However, thousands more at-risk children qualify for the program and are not able to attend. This is not a “wait list” for services but a missed opportunity for 3- and 4- year olds that can impact a lifetime of learning. Currently about one quarter of CPP classrooms receive a rating from **Qualistar**, the state’s current Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). In order to have the greatest impact on school readiness and learning, future efforts should include not just expanded access but also a focus on quality rating and support for quality improvements for all children enrolled in the Colorado Preschool Program.

Progress

- ✓ **Governor’s Budget.** The Hickenlooper-Garcia Administration has indicated strong support for increased access, as reflected the Governor’s proposed 2013-2014 budget. The budget proposes approximately \$20.9 million for expanded access to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten.
- ✓ **Legislative Action.** Legislation has been proposed that would significantly increase access to the Colorado Preschool Program, pending passage of a statewide ballot initiative. Senate Bill 13-213, the modernized School Finance Act, proposes an evolution in our education financing system with significant support for early learning. The legislation would remove the cap on the number of slots available for the Colorado Preschool Program, allowing all at-risk, eligible 3- and 4-year olds to participate.



Continuing the Work

	NEXT STEPS	TIMEFRAME	STATE AGENCY PARTNERS
4.1	Continue efforts for additional preschool slots and a new expanding quality incentive program within the Colorado Preschool Program .	2013-2014	Governor & Lt. Governor’s Office
4.2	Increase the number of Colorado Preschool Program receiving ratings at the highest levels of quality in Colorado’s new Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS).	2014-2016	CDE, CDHS/OEC, Governor & Lt. Governor’s Office

ISSUE 5: Access to full-day Kindergarten



Gains made when a child attends high-quality preschool may diminish over time if the intensity of schooling is not maintained through elementary school. Quality full-day kindergarten sustains the progress that students make in preschool. Full-day kindergarten has substantial effects on a child's ability to develop and thrive. Whether it is at the cognitive, social, or behavioral levels, full-day kindergarten raises academic achievement and closes the gap between average learners and those in poverty or learning English. Low-income children attending full-day kindergarten in Denver Public Schools increased their odds of reading at grade-level by 22 percent, compared to those attending half-day programs (70 percent proficient v. 48 percent proficient).⁷ Not only is it important to know how children are

doing in kindergarten, it is equally as important to have information about a child's development and learning at the start of formal schooling. A statewide readiness assessment for all children in public kindergarten will help ensure parents, educators, community members, and policy-makers know how to best support early literacy gains for each child in their first days of public schooling.

Progress

- ✓ **Increased Access.** In 2011, 44,582 Colorado children attended full-day kindergarten. In 2012, that number increased to 46,526,⁸ giving 1,944 more students access to full-day kindergarten than in 2011. Senate Bill 13-213 proposes universal full-day public kindergarten for all Colorado families wishing to attend. Increased access to full-day kindergarten would be implemented only if voters approve the requisite funding through a statewide ballot initiative.
- ✓ **Public Support.** Interest in the importance of early learning programs is growing across the state. This was recently evidenced throughout the TBD Colorado community-based feedback process. TBD Colorado engaged more than 2,000 Coloradans in an unprecedented effort to learn and provide input on some of the most important issues facing the state. Even in a state as diverse as ours, there are fundamental values that transcend geography, policy, party, race, ethnicity and income status. Of the five issues addressed by TBD – education, health, transportation, state budget, and state workforce – early childhood education rose to the top. The TBD Board of Directors recently released policy recommendations developed as result of these public meetings, including the consideration of legislation to increase the availability of full-day Kindergarten for those parents who want it.

Continuing the Work

	NEXT STEPS	TIMEFRAME	STATE AGENCY PARTNERS
5.1	Continue to focus on access to full-day kindergarten for all families that desire it.	2013-2015	Governor & Lt. Governor's Office
5.2	Deploy a school readiness assessment, using research-based, nationally recognized reliable instruments, to monitor progress across multiple domains for kindergarten students.	Phase 1 2013 Phase 2 2014	CDE, CDHS/OEC

Community Commitment Counts

Colorado will only move the needle on early literacy through the hands-on work of our community partners, the cornerstone of our efforts. The Literacy Matters bus tour that launched this movement highlighted some of that strong community work, and inspired additional efforts. This commitment to connection with communities across the state continues with this year's second annual **Colorado Literacy Week**.

Colorado Literacy Week (May 6-10, 2013) provides opportunities for individual Coloradans to engage in the early literacy movement. From celebrating the accomplishments of the general assembly and executive branch to recognizing some of the most effective efforts for children, this week will highlight successes in early literacy programs and policy, and further inform and empower citizens' efforts in this area. Growing public awareness helps ensure that Colorado will continue to be one of the most highly educated states and that all Colorado children are on a path to be successful readers by third grade.

One Book 4 Colorado headlines Colorado Literacy Week by putting this year's selected book in the hands of 4-year-olds in the state. At the start of the week, 70,000 books will be distributed to children across the state at numerous locales, including local public libraries, **Reach Out and Read** clinics, and local doctors' offices. Books will be available in both English and Spanish.



One Book 4 Colorado is the result of collaboration between Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia's office, **Serve Colorado**, **Reach Out and Read Colorado**, **Colorado State Library, Denver Preschool Program**, public libraries, the private sector, and the foundation community.

It is modeled after the successful **Preschool One Book, One Denver** program originated by the Denver Preschool Program. Both programs are premised on the idea that providing young children with access to quality books promotes early literacy and helps families serve as their children's first and most important teachers.

It's important that all children are supported to read but it is especially important to have targeted efforts that impact specific communities and needs. The following is just a sample of community partners who directly impact children's love of reading and their ability to read proficiently by third grade.

Across the state, Colorado libraries actively support readers through after school and summer reading initiatives. **Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL)** is a collaboration of public libraries dedicated to literacy services for children and families throughout Colorado. CLEL strives to reestablish public libraries as bustling centers where families and children together develop literacy skills and a love of reading.

One Congregation - One Family (OCOF) addresses the needs of homeless families and seniors in many cities throughout the state. Mentors from religious congregations and other entities partner with families to achieve self-sufficiency and forge lasting connections within their communities. Mentors also become early literacy advocates and help families understand the relationship between reading and long-term success for children.



By this summer, **Social Innovation Fund (SIF)** grants from **Mile High United Way** are estimated to reach an astounding 20,000 children and families in more than half of Colorado's counties. Grantees leverage federal SIF funds with local resources to implement their community-based programs. Programs will use a specific set of research to evaluate and better understand program effectiveness over a five year period. Some of the grantees' programs include:

- **Save the Children's Early Steps to School Success** provides education and family support through home visits, group meetings, school connections, a book exchange and community events.
- **Reading Partners**, which provides trained community volunteers to tutor twice a week in schools in low-income communities.

Community roots run deep through the **Providers Advancing School Outcomes (PASO)** project via the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, which aims to build the capacity of informal care providers to boost the school readiness of Latino children. Other organizations are harnessing people-power to turn the curve on literacy rates.



This school year, Mile High United Way also launched the **Colorado Reading Corps** in Jefferson County. The first replication of the incredibly successful Minnesota Reading Corps, the Colorado Reading Corps, deploys 20 **AmeriCorps** literacy interventionists who tutor 600 struggling readers in 12 schools. The program has been tremendously successful; every participating school is reporting student literacy gains. **Power Lunch**, a program in partnership with the **Denver Public Schools Foundation** and Mile High United Way, has harnessed the power of more than 175 business community members to instill a love of reading in third graders through weekly reading sessions.

It is a simple but powerful idea: the gift of a book may launch a lifetime of reading. Several organizations are striving, book-by-book, to build young children's libraries and help families promote literacy in the home:

- Through a partnership with **Scholastic Book Clubs**, the **Book Trust** provides books for kids from low-income families—books that they choose themselves and that become their very own. The Book Trust currently works in Sterling, Greeley, Fort Collins, Aurora, and Denver and has plans to expand to additional communities in the coming years.
- **Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)** is a coalition of state business leaders committed to making early childhood success among the state's highest priorities. In partnership with the Office of Lt. Gov. Garcia, **Barnes & Noble**, Reach Out and Read Colorado and **Usborne Books**, EPIC has launched a statewide campaign to place books in the homes of young children and highlight the importance of adult-child collaborative reading activities.

Many new partners are now embracing the power of Colorado Reads and exploring ways to collaborate.

- The **Junior League of Denver** recently refocused their philanthropic efforts on early literacy and plans to engage in a number of strategic initiatives with the state.
- The **Aspen Community Foundation** is launching the **Cradle to Career** Initiative, a collective impact approach that joins together nonprofits, business, philanthropy and government to support the success of children from Aspen to Parachute – ensuring that they are ready for kindergarten and that they graduate from high school ready for college or career.
- The **Girl Scouts of Colorado (GCSO)** support Girl Scouts' service activities including: book drives, spelling bees, literacy carnivals and literacy tutoring/mentoring programs with younger children. In partnership with the Colorado State Libraries the troops will also support this year's One Book 4 Colorado distribution efforts.
- **Read12** is the class project of the Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation's **Leadership Denver** Class of 2012. Read12 provides age-appropriate reading materials to children from low income homes and helps parents teach their children literacy skills. Read12 will host end-of-school-year book fairs where K-12 students will receive a \$45 book allowance to "purchase" 12 books for their personal library. In its inaugural year, Read12 has partnered with **Hallett Fundamental Academy** and has already committed to host similar efforts at Hallett through 2015.

Moving Forward

In 2012, Colorado Reads raised awareness about the literacy problem in our state and proposed a path forward to ensuring more children are reading by third grade. Colorado Reads 2013 celebrates our progress on the issue, but the work is far from over. The accomplishments outlined in this report have resulted from a shared understanding that literacy development starts early and that targeted literacy strategies for children ages 0-8 are critical to success in school and life. One of the biggest indicators of whether a child will graduate from high school is his or her reading proficiency in the third grade. As mobilized volunteers, donors, businesses, libraries, and community members throughout the state work together to build the next generation of strong readers, Colorado is gaining ground on reading proficiency and promoting a true love of reading as part of the state's culture. The tireless work of Colorado Reads partners will not stop until third grade classrooms around the state no longer have students reading below grade level.

Colorado Reads 2013: The Early Literacy Initiative keeps the conversation going and gives us a sense of what can be a positive force for change to close gaps and drive impacts in early literacy. This report is a call to action for all to get involved in some way – large or small – to move the state forward. It is imperative that our youngest citizens succeed – their success becomes Colorado's success.

Please join the action and find something that inspires you - organize a book drive, establish a One Book program, give your time to read with a student, support family activities - and help children in your community develop a love of reading. Working together, we can make a difference - and we'll be back next year to celebrate the progress we have made.

Endnotes

¹ Population by Age and Gender. (2013). Retrieved from dola.colorado.gov/demog_webapps/pag_parameters.jsf

² "Colorado Early Childhood Needs Assessment," Early Childhood Leadership Commission, November 2011, earlychildhoodcolorado.org/inc/uploads/ECLCNeedsAssessmentFinal.pdf

³ "CSAP/TCAP Data - 2012 TCAP State Summary Results: Reading Grades 3-10," Colorado Department of Education, www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/CoAssess-DataAndResults.asp

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Colorado Department of Education. "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners in Colorado." 2011. www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/download/Resources-Links/StateoftheState2011.pdf (accessed April 25, 2013)

⁶ Gandara, P., R. Rumberger, J. Maxwell-Jolly, and R. Callahan. English Learners in California Schools: Unequal, Outcomes. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11(36), 2003.

⁷ DiGiacomo, Diance, Matthew Barry and Pamela Buckley. "Denver Study Reinforces Positive Effects of Early Education on School Readiness." The Piton Perspective, Summer 2006. The Piton Foundation, Denver, CO. 2006.

⁸ Colorado Department of Education. "2012 Pupil Membership by County, District, and Grade". 2012. www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrentdistrict.htm (accessed April 25, 2013)

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For more information, please visit www.colorado.gov/ltgovernor

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